

NOVA

Produced for PBS by the
WGBH Science Unit



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NOVA: BLACK HOLE APOCALYPSE

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(check local listings)

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PAULA S. APSELL

**Senior Executive Producer, NOVA, and
Director, WGBH Science Unit, WGBH Boston**

Paula Apsell began her work in broadcast typing the public broadcaster WGBH Boston's daily logs, a job, she notes, that is now mercifully automated. While at WGBH-FM, her next move, she developed the award-winning children's drama series *The Spider's Web* and served as an on-air radio news producer. She then joined WGBH's pioneering science documentary series NOVA, producing, among several other programs, *Death of a Disease*, the first long-form documentary about the worldwide eradication of smallpox. Moving to WCVB, the ABC affiliate in Boston, she became senior producer for medical programming, working with Dr. Timothy Johnson. She then spent a year at MIT as a Knight Science Journalism Fellow until she took over the leadership of NOVA, where she is now senior executive producer and director of the WGBH Science Unit. In 2016, Apsell became the second woman and first from the profession of journalism and communications to receive the Galien Foundation's annual Pro Bono Humanum Award, which recognizes contributions leading to improvements in the state of human health. She is also a recipient of the Bradford Washburn Award from the Museum of Science, Boston; the Carl Sagan Award, given by the Council of Scientific Society Presidents; the American Institute of Physics Andrew Gemant Award; and the Planetary Society's Cosmos Award, among many others. She has served on the board of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, the Brandeis University Sciences Advisory Committee, and the International Documentary Association.

JANNA LEVIN (PROGRAM HOST)

Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Barnard College of Columbia University

Janna Levin, the Claire Tow Professor of physics and astronomy at Barnard College of Columbia University, has contributed to an understanding of black holes, the cosmology of extra dimensions, and gravitational waves in the shape of spacetime. Her previous books include *How the Universe Got Its Spots* and a novel, *A Madman Dreams of Turing Machines*, which won the PEN/Bingham Prize. She was recently named a Guggenheim Fellow. Her latest book, *Black Hole Blues and Other Songs From Outer Space*, is the inside story of the discovery of the century: the sound of spacetime ringing from the collision of two black holes more than a billion years ago. She is also the founding director of sciences at Pioneer Works, a culture center in Brooklyn.

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RUSHMORE DeNOOYER

Director, Producer, Writer

Rush DeNooyer is an accomplished filmmaker who has made documentaries for PBS, History, Discovery, National Geographic, Smithsonian, Turner Broadcasting, and others. He has written, produced, and directed numerous PBS NOVA programs over many years, including “Cold Case JFK,” a new investigation of the physical evidence in the Kennedy assassination, “Universe or Multiverse,” the concluding episode of the “Fabric of the Cosmos” series, “Hubble’s Amazing Rescue,” which documented the final repair mission to the Hubble Space Telescope, and others.

DeNooyer most recently directed and wrote “The Bomb,” a landmark two-hour PBS special that tells the story of the most powerful invention ever created by humans, a device that marks a dividing line in our history; today, more than ever, we still live in its shadow. His work has been honored with the George F. Peabody Award, the Writers Guild of America Award, the International Documentary Association’s Distinguished Achievement Award, and numerous CINE awards and Emmy nominations.

Prior to becoming a documentary filmmaker, DeNooyer spent 20 years as a musician and music producer. He graduated from Brown University with an honors degree in history and American Civilization.

PROFESSOR ANDREA GHEZ

Lauren B. Leichtman & Arthur E. Levine Chair in Astrophysics and Director of UCLA Galactic Center Group

Andrea M. Ghez, distinguished professor of physics and astronomy and head of UCLA’s Galactic Center Group, is a world-leading expert in observational astrophysics. She earned her B.S. in physics from MIT in 1987 and her Ph.D. from Caltech in 1992, and has been on the faculty at UCLA since 1994. She has used the Keck telescopes to demonstrate the existence of a supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy, with a mass four million times that of our sun. This is the best evidence yet that these exotic objects really do exist, and provides us with a wonderful opportunity to study the fundamental laws of physics in the extreme environment near a black hole, and learn what role this black hole has played in the formation and evolution of our galaxy.

Professor Ghez has actively disseminated her work to a wide variety of audiences through more than 100 refereed papers and 200 invited talks, as well features in textbooks, documentaries, and science exhibits. She has received numerous honors and awards, including the Crafoord Prize, a MacArthur Fellowship, election to the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the Aaronson Award from the University of Arizona, the Sackler Prize from Tel Aviv University, the American Physical Society’s Maria Goeppert-Mayer Award, the American Astronomical Society’s Newton Lacy Pierce Prize, a Sloan Fellowship, a Packard Fellowship, and several teaching awards.

PRIYAMVADA NATARAJAN

Professor in the Departments of Astronomy and Physics, Yale University

Priyamvada Natarajan is a theoretical astrophysicist interested in cosmology, gravitational lensing, and black hole physics. Her research interests lie in unraveling the nature of exotica in the universe — dark matter, dark energy, and black holes. She is widely recognized for key contributions to two of the most challenging problems in cosmology: mapping dark matter, the origin of the first black hole seeds, and tracing the accretion history of black holes over cosmic time. Her work using gravitational lensing techniques has provided a deeper understanding of the granularity of dark matter in clusters of galaxies. She has developed theoretical models to describe the formation of direct collapse black holes in the early universe that will be tested with the upcoming JWST mission. Recipient of many awards and honors, including the Guggenheim and Radcliffe fellowships, she is the current chair of the Division of Astrophysics of the American Physical Society. In addition to her academic position at Yale, she also currently holds the Sophie and Tycho Brahe Professorship of the Dark Cosmology Center, Niels Bohr Institute, at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She has been recently elected to an honorary professorship for life at the University of Delhi, India. Deeply invested in the public understanding of science, she is a regular contributor to the *New York Review of Books*. Her first book, *Mapping the Heavens*, was published last year.

ADDITIONAL ONSITE TALENT:

JULIA CORT

Deputy Executive Producer, NOVA

Julia Cort has more than 25 years of broadcast experience as a producer, writer, and director. Since joining the WGBH Science Unit in 1991, she has contributed to more than 80 films, including *Making North America*, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, *Smartest Machine on Earth* and *Chasing Pluto*. She played a key role in developing NOVA's award-winning sister series, *NOVA scienceNOW*, currently serving as executive producer. In the pursuit of a story, Cort has traveled deep underground to investigate the hunt for dark matter, been blindfolded and led to secret diamond-making factories, waded into leech-infested swamps, and attempted to re-create the technological feats of ancient Egyptian engineers. She is a recipient of the George Foster Peabody Award, the National Academies Keck Communication Award, the AAAS Science Journalism Award, the American Institute of Physics Science Writing Award, the National Association of Science Writers Science in Society Award, and the News & Documentary Emmy.

CHRIS SCHMIDT

Senior Producer, NOVA

Chris Schmidt is an award-winning show runner, executive producer, writer, director and filmmaker with a focus on documentary and non-fiction television programming. He has traveled the world to produce and direct films and television programs for PBS, Dreamworks Animation, The Discovery Channel, History Channel, National Geographic, Animal Planet and others. Since joining NOVA in 2012 as senior producer, he has developed, produced, written, and executive produced dozens of programs—including news-driven quick-turnaround films, multi-part series, and content for digital platforms.

Prior to joining the NOVA staff, Schmidt served as VP of Special Projects and VP of Production for Powderhouse Productions, one of the largest factual production companies in the northeast. While at Powderhouse, he developed and executive executive-produced the NOVA mini-series *Making Stuff*, as well as a two-hour NOVA special, *Hunting the Elements* – hosted by popular tech writer David Pogue. He also served as show runner/executive producer for more than 100 hours of factual programming in series such as *Extreme Engineering*, *Build It Bigger*, *Mega Engineering* (Discovery Networks), *Sliced*, *The Works* (History Channel) and *Dogs 101* (Animal Planet), as well as numerous limited series and one-offs for PBS, National Geographic Channel, and others.

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